

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2737

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

DIA WASHDC

SECDEF

USIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 2514

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, SY

SUBJECT: SYRIAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHT ASAD'S VISIT TO MOSCOW

1. ASAD'S VISIT TO MOSCOW DOMINATED APRIL 19 MEDIA. PRESS HEADLINED: "DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN ASAD AND BREZHNEV BEGIN. BREZHNEV, PODGORNYY, AND SOVIET LEADERS RECEIVE PRES. ASAD AT MOSCOW AIRPORT. PRES. ASAD EXCHANGES SPEECHES WITH BREZHNEV AND STRESSES STRATEGIC CHARACTER OF RELATIONS BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES. 'PEACE CAN ONLY BE RELIZED BY ISRAEL'S WITHDRAWAL AND ITS RECOGNITION OF PALESTINIAN RIGHTS. OUR EFFORTS HAVE SUCCEEDED IN RESCUING LEBANON AND THE PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE.'" QUOTING LIBERALLY FROM TASS, PRESS REPORTED OFFICIAL TALKS APRIL 18 LASTED FOR TWO AND ONE HALF HOURS. ARTICLES CARRIED TASS CHARACTERIZATION OF TALKS AS OCCURRING IN "ATMOSPHERE OF CORDIALITY AND UNCLASSIFIED

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FRIENDSHIP," AND NOTED THAT COOPERATION "BETWEEN TWO FRIENDLY COUNTRIES CORRESPONDS WITH INTERESTS OF PEOPLES OF TWO STATES" AND SERVES CAUSE OF PROMOTING WORLD PEACE AND REINFORCING JUST STRUGGLE WAGED BY ARAB PEOPLE FOR ELIMINATION OF TRACES OF ISRAELI AGRESSIONS. IN THIS REGARD MENTION WAS MADE OF IMPORTANCE OF CONVENING GENEVA CONFERENCE WITH PARTICIPATION OF ALL PARTIES CONCERNED, INCLUDING

PLO ON EQUAL FOOTING.

2. ARTICLES CARRIED EXTRACTS OF ASAD'S AND BREZHNEV'S REMARKS AT DINNER HELD IN ASAD'S HONOR. ARTICLE IN BAATH EXTRACTED COMMENTS ON VARIOUS TOPICS FROM ASAD'S REMARKS: ON LEBANON: "WE COULD NOT STAND BY AND WATCH LEBANON'S BLOODY TRAGEDY." ON ME: "THE SITUATION IS GOING THROUGH DANGEROUS STAGE DUE TO ISRAEL'S INTRANSIGENCE AND ITS RESISTING EFFORTS FOR JUST PEACE. THE WORLD IS AWARE OF FACTS OF JUST PEACE. POSITION OF SOVIET UNION IS PRINCIPLED ONE IN SUPPORTING PEOPLES; AND OUR CONSULTATIONS WILL REFLECT POSITIVELY ON MOVES TOWARD PEACE."

3. SYRIAN PRESS PRINTED PORTIONS OF BREZHNEV'S REMARKS IN WHICH HE STRESSED, "PEACE CANNOT BE ESTABLISHED IF VITAL INTERESTS OF ANY ME STATE OR PEOPLE ARE USURPED," AND THIS APPLIES "ABOVE ALL TO THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE." OF INTEREST WAS SYRIAN DECISION TO PRINT REMAINDER OF THE SOVIET LEADER'S STATEMENT ON SUBJECT. "THIS NATURALLY ALSO APPLIES TO ALL THE OTHER PEOPLES OF THIS AREA, INCLUDING ISRAEL, FOR EACH OF THEM HAS A RIGHT TO AN INDEPENDENT STATE AND SECURE EXISTENCE." IN ACCOMPANYING COMMENTARY BAATH SENIOR COLUMNIST AMID AL-KHULI MADE POINT THAT TO BET AGAINST TRADITIONALLY SOLID SYRIAN-SOVIET FRIENDSHIP IS TO IGNORE THE ARABS' ANTI-IMPERIALIST POLICY. HE ASSERTED THAT OVERALL "ATTITUDES TOWARD REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ISSUES MAY DIFFER IN SOME DETAILS BUT IN END THEY INTERSECT AT PRINCIPLED COMMON POSITION. THIS GIVES SYRO-SOVIET RELATIONS STRATEGIC CHARACTER. PRESIDENT ASAD'S UNCLASSIFIED

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VISIT TO THE SOVIET UNION WILL CONSECRATE CHARACTER OF THIS RELATIONSHIP AT TIME WHEN RELATIONS HAVE SEEMED SHAKEN AND IN NEED OF REDIRECTION." EDITORIAL CLAIMED IT NATURAL THAT IMPERIALISM WOULD ATTEMPT TO EXPLOIT DIFFERENCES EXISTING BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES BUT THIS POLICY "HAS MET WITH FAILURE." KHULI THEN ASSERTED THAT SYRIA WAS THE "KEY TO THE ARAB REVOLUTION. TO PERCEIVE IT OTHERWISE IS A DANGEROUS HISTORICAL MISTAKE." HE DECLARED THAT SIGNIFICANCE OF ASAD'S VISIT IS THAT IT "CAPABLE OF RESTORING SOME COHERENCE TO SYRO-SOVIET TIES."

4. OTHER EDITORIALS CLAIMED THAT SYRIA GRATEFUL TO SOVIET UNION FOR PREVIOUS SUPPORT RENDERED DESPITE DIFFERENCES WHICH MIGHT EXIST BETWEEN THEM AND THAT REACHING AN UNDERSTANDING WILL REPRESENT IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN CURRENT SITUATION. COMPLETE AGREEMENT ON ALL ISSUES NOT REQUIRED, ONE EDITORIAL ASSERTED, SINCE SOVIET POSITION ON ME SETTLEMENT "VERY CLOSE" TO THAT OF SYRIA.
PELLETREAU

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